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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 JAKARTA 007719

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SECSTATE FOR EAP/IET AND DRL

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KIRF](#) [KJUS](#) [KISL](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: NO END TO AHMADIYAH PLIGHT IN SIGHT

REF: A. JAKARTA 09913 (MOB BUSTS UP AHMADIYAH HQ)  
[1B.](#) JAKARTA 13535 (LOCAL GOVT BANS AHMADIYAH)  
[1C.](#) JAKARTA 07345 (YUDHOYONO ORDERS CRACKDOWN ON MILITANT ACTIVITIES)

Classified By: Political Officer Lissa McAtee, reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

SUMMARY

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[¶](#)1. (SBU) Ahmadiyah followers continue to face difficulties in Indonesia, where many mainstream Muslims consider their sect heretical. Most recently, in West and Central Lombok, mobs from local communities in February and March burned or otherwise destroyed dozens of Ahmadiyah homes in two separate attacks. Police were unable to stop the destruction but did evacuate Ahmadiyah residents to safety. The West and Central Lombok Regency governments established camps to house the resulting 182 internally displaced persons (IDPs), where they remain. In meetings with Embassy and CG Surabaya officers in May, local officials and religious leaders explained the attacks were rooted in a long history of resentment and intolerance of Ahmadiyah within Lombok's mainstream Muslim communities, which view the sect's followers as insular and unfriendly. Unlike the attack that shut down Ahmadiyah headquarters in West Java following a renewed fatwa in 2005 by the Indonesian Ulamas Council (MUI), which had declared Ahmadiyah heretical (ref A), the attacks in Lombok did not appear to be perpetrated by outside extremist groups but, rather, members of the local community. Local leaders gave little hope that a change in attitudes was likely. End Summary.

MOB ATTACKS RESULT IN 182 IDPS

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[¶](#)2. (SBU) On February 4 and March 17, 2006, local residents attacked two separate Ahmadiyah communities on the highly conservative, Muslim-dominated island of Lombok, west of Bali, using rocks, fire and rudimentary weapons such as knives and sticks. During a late May visit to Lombok, Embassy and CG Surabaya officers met with local officials, religious leaders, and Ahmadiyah community leaders, including the National Head of Ahmadiyah, Abdul Basid, prominent Ahmadiyah missionary, Syamsir Ali, and nearly one hundred Ahmadiyah adherents in an IDP barracks to review the current situation and assess the status of religious freedom issues.

[¶](#)3. (SBU) Witnesses reported that during the February 4 attack in West Lombok, residents of a nearby village marched on an

Ahmadiyah neighborhood and burned or otherwise destroyed all 27 of their residences, leaving 137 Ahmadiyah followers homeless. The local village head, Gegerung Maskum, sympathetic to Ahmadiyah, reported rumors of the impending attack to the police a day before it occurred. Accounts of the number of attackers varied between 500 and 1,000. Maskum said that attackers were from his village of about 4,000 residents and neighboring villages. According to Ahmadiyah leaders and witnesses, some 400-500 onlookers watched while a small number of the group destroyed their homes. Local leaders, the police and Ahmadiyah all agreed that mob leaders were locals and unaffiliated with the Islam Defender's Front (FPI), which was responsible for leading the attack against Ahmadiyah headquarters and Christian churches in West Lombok during the summer of 2005 (ref A). Maskum reported that on the day of the attack against Ahmadiyah residents, three of the attackers verbally threatened him, warning that they had enough gas to burn his home as well.

**¶4. (U)** During the March 17 attack in Central Lombok, the Anti-Ahmadiyah Alliance (AMANAH), a local organization formed to expel Ahmadiyah from Central Lombok, led hundreds in the destruction of the homes of 45 Ahmadiyah members. The attack followed AMANAH's public warning to Ahmadiyah that if sect members did not leave their homes within one month they would be forcibly removed. These two attacks were the seventh and eight such incidents against Ahmadiyah in Lombok since 1998, when an estimated 2,000 Ahmadiyah members lived on Lombok. Ahmadiyah leaders told us that fewer than 400 members now remain on the Island.

**¶5. (SBU)** Although both the recent Lombok and West Java

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incidents resulted in the destruction of property and the displacement of Ahmadiyah followers, the events had a different catalyst. The Lombok attackers came from the local community and apparently motivated by dislike, suspicion and the usually petty jealousies, whereas political factors likely motivated the attacks on Ahmadiyah headquarters in West Java (ref. A) and involved outside provocateurs. Since the renewal of the fatwa declaring Ahmadiyah heretical in 2005, some local governments have banned Ahmadiyah activities through local bylaws (ref. B), but with the exception of West Java, there were no reports of violence in any of those districts. Ahmadiyah continues to fight the constitutionality of those bans through local administrative courts, with limited success.

POLICE INACTION

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**¶6. (U)** In contrast to other incidents in eastern Indonesia (e.g., Central Sulawesi, Moluku) security officials from the Indonesian National Police (INP) Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) failed to respond to warnings that violent attacks were imminent. Ahmadiyah followers complained that despite police promises to protect their property once evacuated, the police did little to stop the destruction of their homes or to hold perpetrators accountable. Although officials had a one-day warning before the February 4 attack and a one-month notice before the March 17 attack, the hundreds of police, TNI and INP officials focused on evacuating Ahmadiyah followers rather than making arrests or preventing property destruction.

**¶7. (SBU)** West Lombok's Chief of Police, Adjunct Senior Commissioner I Gusti Bagus Sujeto, told us that police could not prevent large groups from attacking Ahmadiyah residences. Sujeto, a local Hindu resident who appeared sympathetic to Ahmadiyah's predicament, said the police did not confront mob members for fear of angering them and creating a more violent situation the security personnel could not control. He claimed that police focused on evacuating Ahmadiyah members, some of them forcibly, to prevent deaths or injuries, since they had neither the equipment nor the training to control

such a riot (as is common in Indonesia).

¶18. (SBU) Intimidation of police by local communities, politicians or mobs also added to the police's inability to arrest and prosecute suspects. Ahmadiyah's opponents reportedly forced the police to release all suspects. During the February 4 attack, police reportedly arrested three persons for property destruction, only to release them at the request of the Deputy Mayor. Days after the attack, police made another arrest, this time of a suspected provocateur, but released him before they completed questioning when truckloads of people arrived at the police station to demand the suspect's release. There were no arrests made in the subsequent attack on March 14.

¶19. (C) Sujeto told us that the conflict between local residents and Ahmadiyah was for the local government to fix, not the police, which was preoccupied with recurring communal and religious conflicts. He said that the government had to address the root causes by "socializing tolerance" and educating the people. Deputy Chief of Police for West Lombok, Radjo Harahap, told us that the fundamental problem was Ahmadiyah's "exclusiveness" and "arrogance," a perspective we found prevalent among local government officials and non-Ahmadiyah Muslim religious leaders.

#### GOVERNMENT HOUSES IDPs INDEFINITELY

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¶10. (SBU) All 187 Ahmadiyah IDPs remain housed in barren, government-provided barracks, dependent on the government for food, security -- and a plan. Many of these individuals have been IDPs previously; one told us he had fled his home seven times. Local government officials of West Lombok promised to compensate the 137 IDP's in West Lombok for the loss of their homes but reportedly have not taken any steps to do so. No such promise was made to the 45 IDPs in Praya, Central Lombok, and both IDP communities wait for the government to plan a safe return for them into the community. They told us their only other hope is a bid for political asylum in Australia or Canada, for which Ahmadiyah actively campaigns by publicizing their plight and intentions. (Note: Ahmadiyah leaders admitted slim chances for gaining political asylum in

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either of these countries, but see the attempt as an opportunity to internationalize their cause even if the asylum claims ultimately prove unsuccessful. End Note.)

¶11. (SBU) May 23 and 24 we met with nearly 100 IDPs in the West Lombok and Central Lombok IDP camps. They reported that depression and hopelessness had become widespread in their community, and children suffered from lingering trauma. Ahmadiyah members from the IDP camps complained of employment discrimination based on their religious affiliation thereby limiting employment prospects and their ability to live independently. The women in Central Lombok especially complained of the lack of security at the government provided barracks and reported break-ins and molestation at night by unknown assailants.

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT NOT LEADING

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¶12. (C) West Lombok Regency government representatives described to us three ways to solve tensions between Ahmadiyah and other Muslims in Lombok: (1) Ahmadiyah could create a new religion and stop calling itself "Muslim" (a suggestion that was first floated by the GOI Minister of Religion); (2) Ahmadiyah could return to the fold of mainstream Islam; or (3) Ahmadiyah could disperse (two persons per regency) and thereby be "absorbed" into mainstream religious communities. Local government representatives did not have a plan that would accommodate Ahmadiyah members living and worshiping in the same village, nor did they refer to compensation that Ahmadiyah IDPs in

West Lombok claimed the local government promised them.  
(Note: Lombok remains a poor province with little independent resources; it is not clear where funding for such compensation would come.)

¶13. (SBU) Dr. H. Lalu Sernata, Head of Development for West Lombok, told us that the root of the problem was that Ahmadiyah was too exclusive because its followers will not pray with other Muslims and this was offensive. He said that teaching religious tolerance was not a viable option because many Lombok residents are "uneducated" and therefore easily influenced by Islamic religious leaders with intolerant views of Ahmadiyah and its teachings.

¶14. (C) Ahmadiyah leaders complained to us privately that the West Lombok Regent showed no interest in their plight and failed to fulfill promises to meet with them to hear their grievances. They described the Central Lombok Regent as more sympathetic but still unable to control mobs wanting to terrorize Ahmadiyah followers. Ahmadiyah leaders speculated that President Yudhoyono did not have the political will to help them obtain recognition of their religious rights, and their best hope lay with former President and longstanding ardent religious freedom advocate, Abdurrahman Wahid, popularly known as Gus Dur.

#### MUI PROMOTES INTOLERANCE

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¶15. (C) The police, West Lombok government officials and Ahmadiyah followers told us that the Lombok branch of Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) was by far the most influential institution on the island. Known as "Tuanku Gurus," these MUI members have a moral authority substantially higher than that of the police and local governments. Ahmadiyah leaders told us that if MUI supported Ahmadiyah, their problems would be largely solved. However, although MUI has publicly stated that it does not support violence as a method of dealing with the Ahmadiyah problem, it is unlikely that MUI will take steps to end discrimination against Ahmadiyah, since it was MUI at the national level that in 2006 renewed the 1980 fatwa (a non-legally binding religious edict) declaring Ahmadiyah heretical (ref. A).

¶16. (C) West Lombok's leading Tuanku Guru, H. Sofwan Hakim, explained to us that he saw MUI as a principal arbiter between the government and the people, between religions and within Islam, including Ahmadiyah. Hakim said that he recently met with Ahmadiyah representatives, the police and local government officials to find a solution for Ahmadiyah's problems. At that meeting, Hakim proposed that the government compensate Ahmadiyah by purchasing homes in Mataram, the capital of Lombok, for the IDPs. In exchange,

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Ahmadiyah would have to stop "bothering" neighbors by building mosques exclusively for Ahmadiyah and refusing to pray with other Muslims. Hakim said the alternative was for Ahmadiyah members to return to their homes but to "suppress Ahmadiyah characteristics." Otherwise, he said, he could not guarantee their safety. Hakim told us the best solution would be if Ahmadiyah followers would rejoin mainstream Islam.

¶17. (C) Hakim and the other Tuanku Gurus present told us they found Ahmadiyah teachings deeply offensive. They said that Ahmadiyah was too exclusive, that its followers built mosques next to mosques already established by other Muslims, and they should not call themselves Muslims if they will not pray with other Muslims. Hakim said he was not surprised most violence against Ahmadiyah takes place in Lombok, attributing this to the widespread low level of education there. (Note: Significant Ahmadiyah populations live peacefully in Sumatra and other locations in Indonesia. End Note.)

COMMENT

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¶18. (C) Mainstream Muslim groups have decided that Ahmadiyah is an illegitimate form of Islam; the question now is whether less tolerant Muslims will continue to feel this absolves them of responsibility to live in harmony with Ahmadiyah.

The prevailing view that Ahmadiyah's beliefs and practices lie at the root of the problem provides a classic example of "blaming the victim" and will preclude a peaceful resolution for Ahmadiyah in Lombok in the near term. Although most of our contacts said that the low level of education on the island was a key factor in the attacks, a lack of leadership willing to educate the population also clearly contributed to the conflict. In our discussions with government and religious leaders, the concept that religious freedom was not a negotiable right seemed to elude many of Ahmadiyah's opponents. It does not help that the national government appears to condone hostility to Ahmadiyah. The recent public statement of Minister of Religious Affairs M. Maftuh Basyuni

that Ahmad iyah should either create a new religion or come back into the fold of mainstream Islam expresses a sentiment we heard echoed repeatedly on Lombok. While President Yudhoyono's government has spoken recently on plans to take action against militants (ref. C), he has remained silent on the status of Ahmadiyah. Gus Dur is the only public figure to speak out repeatedly on behalf of Ahmadiyah, though former President Megawati Soekarnoputri also voiced concern after the recent attacks on Lombok. Despite occasional sympathetic statements, Ahmadiyah appears to command little support from the political class.

AMSELEM